

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 10130 01 OF 02 242037Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 10130

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E.O. 11652:N/A
SUBJECT:BELGIAN MEDIA REACTION

1. BELGIAN MEDIA FOCUS WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 CENTERED ON DISCUSSION IN
PARLIAMENT OF THE INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AND ON THE RETURN OF SOME OF
THE BELGIAN PARATROOPERS. EDITORIALISTS CONTINUE TO DISCUSS THE
HANDLING OF THE OPERATION, AS WELL AS THE FUTURE OF BELGIUM'S RE-
LATIONS WITH ZAIRE.

2. LE SOIR OBSERVES: "THE REASON WHY THE RESCUE OPERATION COULD NOT
BE LAUNCHED MORE RAPIDLY, SAYS MR. SIMONET, IS THAT THE AGREEMENT OF
THE AMERICANS ABOUT THE NEEDED LOGISTIC SUPPORT -- REFUELLING PLANES

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WAS OBTAINED DURING THE NIGHT OF WEDNESDAY TO THURSDAY. THE U.S.
HAS CERTAINLY HURRIED. NEVERTHELESS, WITHOUT (THE U.S.) THE BELGIAN
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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 10130 01 OF 02 242037Z

PARATROOPERS COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN OFF. WHY DOESN'T THE (BELGIAN)
AIR FORCE POSSESS ITS OWN REFUELLING PLANES? BECAUSE IT IS EXPENSIVE,
SAYSMR. VANDEN BOEYNANTS. UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS CAN A COUNTRY WITH
SUCH LIMITED MEANS AS OURS AFFORD TO CONDUCT A 'GREATAFRICAN POLICY'?
THE ANSWER IS A MORE OR LESS MODEST 'NO', BOTH IN THE OPPOSITION
AND IN THE COALITION PARTIES. OF COURSE THEY ARE NOT SAYING THAT WE
SHOULD LEAVE ZAIRE FOREVER. BUT THEY DO NOT SEE CLEARLY BY WHAT MEANS

BELGIUM COULD REMAIN THERE WITHOUT RUNNING AT LEAST THE RISK IN THE SHORTER OR MEDIUM TERM OF SEEING ITS CITIZENS, THEIR POSSESSIONS AND THEIR LIVES, PERIODICALLY THREATENED."

3. DISCUSSING PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S ANGRY REMARKS ABOUT BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER HENRI SIMONET, LA LIBRE BELGIQUE WRITES "IT IS CERTAINLY NOT IN ZAIRE'S INTEREST TO PLAY UP THESE PROBLEMS, NOR TO TRY TO EXPLOIT THE DIFFERENCES THAT HAVE BEEN NOTICED BETWEEN FRANCE AND BELGIUM. FOR, AFTER ALL, ALTHOUGH BELGIUM HAS A MAJOR INTEREST IN THE CONTINUATION OF THE EXPLOITATION AND OF THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF ZAIRIAN COPPER, ZAIRE ITSELF IS LARGELY BENEFITTING FROM THAT COOPERATION. IF ZAIRE WERE TO ASK FRANCE TO TAKE OVER BELGIUM'S ROLE THE RESULT WOULD BE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS DAMAGING FOR THE ECONOMY OF ZAIRE ALREADY IN POOR SHAPE. IT IS MOREOVER SURE THAT FRANCE, EVEN THOUGH IT IS JEALOUS OF BELGIUM IN THIS FIELD, WOULD NOT ACCEPT SUCH A RADICAL DECISION SO OBVIOUSLY CONTRARY TO EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY."

4. LA CITE COMMENTS THAT "IT IS UNFORTUNATELY NOT POSSIBLE TO EXPLAIN THE ENTIRE SHABA AFFAIR...BY THE WILL OF THE PRO-SOVIET CAMP TO EVICT THE WEST FROM ITS KEY ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC POSITIONS ON THAT CONTINENT. THE CONFRONTATION IS TAKING PLACE IN A VERY COMPLEX NET OF ETHNIC ANTAGONISMS OR OF PEOPLES' DEMANDS...IN THE CASE OF ZAIRE, AND ESPECIALLY OF SHABA, A BLATANT INTERVENTION WAS NOT NECESSARY."

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 10130 01 OF 02 242037Z

ESSARY. IT IS SUFFICIENT TO EQUIP AND TO PREPARE, IF NECESSARY, THROUGH THE PROXY OF ALLIED EXILES AND OPPONENTS (OF THE REGIME) WHO HAVE SUPPORT AMONG CERTAIN POPULATIONS. THAT IS WHAT MADE POSSIBLE THE SUDDEN INITIAL SUCCESS OF THE RECENT ATTACK ON SHABA." TURNING TO THE FUTURE OF COOPERATION WITH ZAIRE, THE PAPER WRITES: "THE WEST THEORETICALLY COULD DROP ZAIRE, IN DEBT TO THE TUNE OF 2 BILLION DOLLARS, SUFFERING FROM RAMPAGING INFLATION AND INCREASING UNEMPLOYMENT, AND WITH A SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED REGIME WHOSE POLITICAL CREDIT IS GRAVELY SHATTERED. IT WON'T DO SO BECAUSE OF THE VASTNESS OF WHAT IS AT STAKE: MINERAL RESOURCES, A CENTRAL STRATEGIC POSITION, THE PRESTIGE OF THE WEST ON THE ENTIRE CONTINENT."

5. LE PEUPLE DISCUSSES THE REACTION OF PRAVDA: "OF COURSE PRAVDA IS AVOIDING THE DRAMA OF THE EUROPEAN MINORITY TRAPPED IN KOLWEZI. IT PREFERS TO WRITE THAT 'THE PEOPLES ARE REVOLTED BY THE IMPERIALIST MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE' WHEREAS THE PEOPLES, AT LEAST IN EUROPE, ARE REVOLTED BY THE ATROCITIES WHOEVER MAY BE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM."

6. IN A SEPARATE EDITORIAL, THE SAME PAPER DISCUSSES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDIA WHICH, BY ANNOUNCING THE UPCOMING OPERATION, MAY HAVE ENDANGERED THE LIVES OF THE EUROPEANS TRAPPED IN KOLWEZI. "IN THE PRESENT CASE, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN THE SILENCE OF ALL THE INVOLVED (RADIO) STATIONS" AS WAS DONE AT THE TIME OF THE OPERATION ON STANLEYVILLE IN 1964..." IT WAS LESS EASY IN THIS CASE BECAUSE THE OPERATION UNDER PREPARATION INVOLVED SEVERAL COUNTRIES. BUT IT WAS NOT IMPOSSIBLE."

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 10130 02 OF 02 242040Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BRUSSELS 10130

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7. WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION ON BELGIUM'S ZAIRE POLICY, MANU RUYS IN DE STANDAARD WRITES: "IT IS GOOD THAT THE GOVERNMENT ADMITS SO OPENLY THE NEED FOR REFLECTION AND FOR A NEW APPROACH AND THAT IT PROMISES TO INVOLVE PARLIAMENT IN THE PREPARATION THEREOF. THE GOVERNMENT PUTS THE ZAIRE QUESTION IN THE BROAD PERSPECTIVE OF AN AFRICA ABOUT WHICH WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW ARE FIGHTING WITH THE CHINESE ONLOOKER IN THE BACKGROUND. IT WAS TIME THAT OUR AFRICA POLICY AND OUR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WAS PROJECTED AGAINST THAT BACKDROP..."

8. THEO POPPE IN GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN COMMENTS: "IT IS NOT SUDDENLY TODAY THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEGUN TO QUESTION WHETHER BELGIUM HAS AN AFRICA POLICY AND WHETHER OUR POLICY TOWARDS ZAIRE IS THE RIGHT ONE. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH TV, UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 BRUSSE 10130 02 OF 02 242040Z

EVEN THE PRIME MINISTER UNDERLINED THAT BELGIUM IS A SMALL COUNTRY, CANNOT AFFORD WHAT FRANCE CAN AFFORD AND HOPES IN THE FUTURE TO BE ABLE TO FALL IN LINE WITH THE ATTITUDE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TOWARDS AFRICA. IT IS THUS RECOGNIZED THAT BELGIUM DOES NOT HAVE AN AFRICA POLICY OF ITS OWN. BUT IOL

NOT AN ILLUSION TO BELIEVE THAT THE EC WOULD BE CAPABLE OF WORKING OUT AN AFRICAN POLICY?... IN FACT ONE SHOULD SEEK A GLOBAL WESTERN AFRICA POLICY, TOGETHER WITH THE U.S. CERTAINLY, UP TO THE PRESENT THE CHANCES (OF ACHIEVING SUCH POLICY) ARE VERY SMALL, CONSIDERING CARTER'S STRANGE POLICY. BUT A CHANGE IS TAKING PLACE. THERE IS A GROWING AWARENESS THAT A COUNTERWEIGHT MUST BE POSED TO CONSTANTLY EXPANDING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE. THE SOVIETS IN AFRICA ARE ACHIEVING A GEOPOLITICAL POWER POSITION, WHICH, CONSIDERING THE CONTROL OF SEA LANES AND RAW MATERIALS, CAN FORCE WESTERN EUROPE TO 'FINLANDIZATION'. IS THIS WHAT OUR SO-CALLED 'PROGRESSIVES' WANT? THE FRENCH HAVE IN GOOD TIME REALIZED THAT DANGER AND, FOR THE TIME BEING, CONSTITUTE THE ONLY COUNTERWEIGHT. THEY ARE ALSO AT THE ORIGIN OF THE PAN-AFRICAN PEACE FORCE FOR ZAIRE, COMPOSED OF COUNTRIES WHICH WANT TO SET UP A DAM AGAINST THE SOVIETS. IF THIS WERE TO BE SUCCESSFUL, IT WOULD BE A WAY OUT FOR BELGIUM. THE AFRICAN INTERESTS OF OUR COUNTRY ARE NOT SERVED AT ALL BY CREATING DIVISIONS WITH FRANCE..."

9. HET LAATSTE NIEUWS SAID: "NEITHER TINDEMANS NOR TO DISPEL THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY REALIZED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION TOO LATE... BY ITS MISTAKES THE GOVERNMENT HAS PUT ITSELF, OUR COUNTRY AND THE BELGIANS IN ZAIRE IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. IT WILL NOW HAVE TO ACT MORE CLEVERLY AND DIPLOMATICALLY TO AVOID HAVING OUR FELLOW COUNTRYMEN NOT WANT TO GO TO ZAIRE ANYMORE. OR HAVING UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 BRUSSE 10130 02 OF 02 242040Z

THEM CHASED AWAY, ALL OF THEM, BY THE ZAIRESE."
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